Community Letter in Support of Nonpartisanship
UPDATED June 1, 2018

The Honorable Lindsey Graham
290 Hart Senate Office Building
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Graham:

The undersigned organizations strongly oppose proposals that would politicize the charitable nonprofit and philanthropic community by repealing or weakening current federal tax law protections that prohibit 501(c)(3) organizations from endorsing, opposing, or contributing to political candidates.

Nonpartisanship is a cornerstone principle that has strengthened the public’s trust of the charitable community. In exchange for enjoying tax-exempt status and the ability to receive tax-deductible contributions, 501(c)(3) organizations – charitable nonprofits, including religious congregations, and foundations – agree to not engage in “any political campaign on behalf of (or in opposition to) any candidate for public office.”

That provision of law protects the integrity and independence of charitable nonprofits and foundations. It shields the entire 501(c)(3) community against the rancor of partisan politics so the charitable community can be a safe haven where individuals of all beliefs come together to solve community problems free from partisan divisions. It screens out doubts and suspicions regarding ulterior partisan motives of charitable organizations, as undoubtedly would occur if even just a few charitable organizations engaged in partisan politics. Nonpartisan credibility is critical to the ability of 501(c)(3) organizations to work with elected officials of all parties at the local, state, and federal levels to address community needs.

Charitable nonprofits, including religious congregations, are free to speak on important matters of the day and advocate on public policy issues and legislation. Private foundations, while barred from most lobbying activities, are free to engage in public debates, promote public education efforts, and fund a wide range of issue-focused activities. The relevant language in Section 501(c)(3) merely prohibits partisan campaign intervention, defined to include endorsing or opposing candidates for public office, publishing or distributing statements for or against candidates, or using tax-deductible and other resources to support partisan campaign activities.

We are united in opposing any and all efforts to weaken or repeal this longstanding protection in the federal tax code (sometimes called the Johnson Amendment) that President Eisenhower signed into law in 1954. Weakening the law by allowing leaders of individual 501(c)(3) entities to endorse candidates for public office and engage in some partisan electioneering activities would damage the integrity and effectiveness of all charitable organizations and spawn litigation as innovative partisans seek to expand gray areas in the proposed legislation. Repealing the Johnson Amendment, an approach promoted by the President and some in Congress, would damage the federal Treasury as people take tax deductions for political contributions they could then funnel through charitable nonprofits, undercut fair elections by providing a loophole to avoid campaign contribution disclosure laws, and empower politicians to exert pressure for access to foundation assets and charitable funds for their own partisan campaigns rather than for the public good.
We urge you to join us in opposing efforts to weaken and/or repeal the current law that for six decades has successfully protected the integrity and effectiveness of charitable nonprofits and foundations by keeping them apart from partisan politics.

Respectfully,

South Carolina

1000 Feathers, LLC  Cayce
A Child's Haven  Greenville
Adult Enrichment Centers
AID Upstate
Alliance For Full Acceptance
Alston Wilkes Society  Columbia
Angels Charge Ministry  Spartanburg
Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired  Charleston
Beginnings SC  West Columbia
Bellwether Non-Profit Advisors  Simpsonville
Black River United Way  Georgetown
Callie and John Rainey Foundation  Anderson
Carolina Business Equipment  Columbia
Carolina Human Reinvestment  Columbia
Catherine Jones Consulting  ccbozard consulting
Central Carolina Community Foundation  Columbia
Centre Stage-SC!  Columbia
Charleston Animal Society
Charleston Stands
Child Abuse Prevention Association  North Charleston
Children's Attention Home  Charleston
Children's Museum of the Lowcountry  Port Royal
Children's Recovery Center  Rock Hill
Church Street Historic Foundation  Charleston
Clemmons Thomas Consulting, LLC  Saint Stephen
Clover Area Assistance Center  Clover
Coastal Conservation League  Charleston
Columbia Children's Theatre  Columbia
Columbia World Affairs Council  Columbia
Community Foundation of Greenville  Greenville
Craig Farm Historic Preservation Society  Lancaster
Dining for Women  Greenville

Dorchester Children's Center  Summerville
Eat Smart Move More SC  Columbia
Eau Claire Cooperative Health Center  Columbia
Family Services, Inc. d/b/a Origin SC  North Charleston
Florence County Disabilities Foundation  Lake City
Georgetown SC Habitat for Humanity  Pawleys Island
Girl Scouts of Eastern South Carolina  Florence
Girls on the Run Charleston
Gravatt Camp and Conference Center  Aiken
Greenville Family Partnership  Greenville
Greenville Literacy Association  Greenville
Greenville Partnership for Philanthropy  Greenville
Greenwood County Community Foundation  Greenwood
Greer Relief & Resources Agency, Inc.  Greer
Habitat for Humanity Georgetown County  Georgetown
Habitat for Humanity Greenville SC  Greenville
Helping Hands of Georgetown  Georgetown
Home Works of America  Columbia
Hope Center for Children  Spartanburg
Hope Remains Youth Ranch  Wellford
Increasing H.O.P.E Financial Training Center  North Charleston
Institute for Practical Theology  Columbia
International Primate Protection League  Summerville
IRCS - Ivoire Rural Communication Services  Charleston
Justice 360  Columbia
Kiawah Cares Foundation  Kiawah Island
Kingdom Kids Foundation  Taylors
Koinonia Communities, LLC  Lancaster
Lancaster County Council of the Arts  Lancaster
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Lowcountry Food Bank
Lowcountry Local First
Maia Moms
Martha W. Daniels Foundation
Miracle Hill Ministries
NAMI Lowcountry
National Royal Miss
Neighbor to Neighbor of South Carolina
New Morning Foundation
North Charleston Pops!
Pregnancy Center and Clinic of the Lowcountry
Reid Lehman Consulting
SC Independent Colleges and Universities
Second Helpings
Skip To My Lupus, Inc.
South Carolina Afterschool Alliance
South Carolina Appleseed Legal Justice Center
South Carolina Arts Alliance
South Carolina Association for Community Economic Development
South Carolina Cancer Alliance
South Carolina Christian Action Council
South Carolina HIV/AIDS Council
St. Luke’s Free Medical Clinic
Still Hopes
Susan G. Komen Lowcountry
The Arc of South Carolina
The Dream Center of Pickens County, Inc.
The Early Learning Partnership of York County
The Gambrill Foundation
The Heart2Heart Foundation, Inc.
The Springs Close Foundation
The Stringer Foundation
The Upton Trio
The Warehouse Theatre
The Weathers Group
The Wellness Council for SC
Together SC
Trio Solutions Inc.
United Christian Ministries
United Way Association of South Carolina
United Way of Greenville County
United Way of Oconee County, Inc.
United Way of Sumter, Clarendon & Lee Counties
United Way of the Midlands
Upstate International
Upstate SC Chapter of Americans United
Windwood Farm Home for Children, Inc.
Women’s Rights and Empowerment Network

National Organizations

Abila
Accreditation Council for Psychoanalytic Education, Inc.
AdoptAClassroom.org
African Diaspora United, Inc.
Alliance for Strong Families and Communities
Alfred P. Sloan Foundation
America Solidaria U.S.
American Alliance of Museums
American Association of Anatomists
American Association of Physics Teachers
American Association of Teachers of German
American Atheists
American Bladder Cancer Society
American Board of Venous & Lymphatic Medicine
American Brass Chamber Music Association
American Conference of Academic Deans
American Heart Association
American Historical Association
American Jewish Committee
American Medical Association Foundation
American Physiological Society
American Podiatric Medical Association, Inc.
American Red Cross
Americans for the Arts
Americans Promoting Study Abroad
Americans United for Separation of Church and State
Amyloidosis Foundation
Animal Legal Defense Fund
Annie E. Casey Foundation
Anti-Defamation League
Asian Pacific American Legal Resource Center
Association for Jewish Outreach Professionals
Association of American Colleges and Universities
Association of Art Museum Directors
Association of Direct Response Fundraising Counsel
Association of Fundraising Professionals
Association of Immunization Managers
Association of Nature Center Administrators
Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice
Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty
Baptist Women in Ministry
Barr Foundation
BoardSource
Brady Campaign and Center to Prevent Gun Violence
Camp Fire
Campion Foundation
Catholic Charities USA
Catholic Mobilizing Network
Celiac Disease Foundation
Center for Health, Environment & Justice
Center for Inquiry
Charles Stewart Mott Foundation
Citizen Schools
CleanSlateNow
Common Cause
Commonwealth Fund
Council on Foundations
Council for Global Equality
Dance USA
Dementia Society, Inc.
Democracy 21
Destination & Travel Foundation
Dietel Partners, LLC
Disability Rights Advocacy Fund
Easter Seals
Ecology Project International
Engineering Conferences International
Episcopal Relief & Development
Feed the Children
Feeding America
Fidesco USA
Food & Water Watch
Ford Foundation
Free Press
Girl Scouts of the USA
Girls Inc.
Global Integrity
Goodwill Industries International, Inc.
Grantmakers for Effective Organizations
Greater Nonprofits
GuideStar
Habitat for Humanity International
Harbor Compliance
HawkWatch International
Hindu American Foundation
Histiocytosis Foundation
Horizons National
Human Science Institute
Independent Sector
International Essential Tremor Foundation
International Hearing Dog, Inc.
International Performing Arts for Youth
International Primate Protection League
Issue One
Jessie Ball DuPont Fund
Jewish Alliance for Law and Social Action
Jewish Council for Public Affairs
Jewish Federations of North America Leadership USA
League of American Orchestras
League of Women Voters
Leukemia Research Foundation
Local Learning: The National Network for Folk Arts in Education
Lumina Foundation
Lymphoma Foundation of America
Migraine Research Foundation
Millennium Water Alliance
Mentors International
Morino Ventures, LLC
National 4-H Council
National Alliance of Community Economic Development
National Association of Charitable Gift Planners
National Association of Health Data Organizations
National Association of State Boating Law Administrators (NASBLA)
National Association of Watch and Collectors
National Association for Shoplifting Prevention
NAMI, National Alliance on Mental Illness
National Center for Appropriate Technology
National Center for Fire and Life Safety
National Center on Shaken Baby Syndrome
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National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy  
National Council of Behavioral Health  
National Council of Churches  
National Council of Nonprofits  
National Council of Tribes  
National Dance Education Organization  
National Hartford Centers of Gerontological Nursing Excellence  
National Human Services Assembly  
National Indian Child Welfare Association  
National LGBTQ Task Force  
National Organization for Albinism and Hypopigmentation  
National Runaway Safeline  
National Safe Place Network  
National Tongan American Society  
NEO Law Group  
North American Bramble Growers Research Foundation  
OPERA America  
Partnership for America's Children  
Pension Fund of the Christian Church  
Philanthropy for Active Civic Engagement  
Project Wet Foundation  
Project Managers Without Borders  
Public Citizen  
Rockefeller Brothers Fund  
Secular Coalition for America  
Senior Executives Association  
Seva Foundation  
Skillman Foundation  
Silicon Valley Community Foundation  
Smith's Food and Drug  
Social Velocity  
The Arc of the United States  
The Aspen Institute  
The Association of Junior Leagues International, Inc.  
The Commonwealth Fund  
The Dibble Institute  
The Educational Foundation of America  
The George Gund Foundation  
The Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi  
The Michael J. Fox Foundation  
The Ocean Foundation  
The Pulmonary Fibrosis Foundation  
The United Methodist Church – General Board of Church and Society  
The Voter Participation Center  
TIDES  
Unemployment Services Trust  

Union for Reform Judaism  
United Philanthropy Forum  
United Soldiers and Sailors of America  
United Way Worldwide  
University Professional & Continuing Education Association  
US Lacrosse  
Vasculitis Foundation  
Volunteers in Medicine  
Volunteers of America  
Voto Latino  
Wallace Global Fund  
WasteWater Education  
Weingart Foundation  
William and Flora Hewlett Foundation  
Words Without Borders  
World Day of Prayer USA  
World Neighbors, Inc.  
Youth Services America  
YWCA USA